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POEMS BY ALICE MEYNELL

By the same Author

THE RHYTHM OF LIFE

AND OTHER ESSAYS

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POEMS

BY

ALICE MEYNELL

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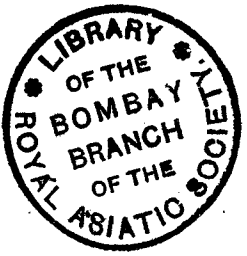

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TO

W. M.

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POEMS

SONNET

MY HEART SHALL BE THY GARDEN

MY heart shall be thy garden. Come, my own,
Into thy garden; thine be happy hours
Among my fairest thoughts, my tallest flowers,
From root to crowning petal, thine alone.

Thine is the place from where the seeds are sown
Up to the sky enclosed, with all its showers.
But ah, the birds, the birds! Who shall build bowers
To keep these thine? O friend, the birds have flown.

For as these come and go, and quit our pine
To follow the sweet season, or, new-comers,
Sing one song only from our alder-trees.

My heart has thoughts, which, though thine eyes hold mine,
Flit to the silent world and other summers,
With wings that dip beyond the silver seas.

SONNET

THOUGHTS IN SEPARATION

WE never meet; yet we meet day by day
Upon those hills of life, dim and immense:
The good we love, and sleep—our innocence.
O hills of life, high hills! And higher than they,

Our guardian spirits meet at prayer and play.
Beyond pain, joy, and hope, and long suspense,
Above the summits of our souls, far hence,
An angel meets an angel on the way.

Beyond all good I ever believed of thee
Or thou of me, these always love and live.
And though I fail of thy ideal of me,

My angel falls not short. They greet each other.
Who knows, they may exchange the kiss we give,
Thou to thy crucifix, I to my mother.

TO A POET

THOU who singest through the earth,
All the earth's wild creatures fly thee,
Everywhere thou marrest mirth.
Dumbly they defy thee.
There is something they deny thee.

Pines thy fallen nature ever
For the unfallen Nature sweet.
But she shuns thy long endeavour,
Though her flowers and wheat
Throng and press thy pausing feet.

Though thou tame a bird to love thee,
Press thy face to grass and flowers,
All these things reserve above thee
Secrets in the bowers,
Secrets in the sun and showers.

Sing thy sorrow, sing thy gladness.
In thy songs must wind and tree
Bear the fictions of thy sadness,
Thy humanity.
For their truth is not for thee.

Wait, and many a secret nest,
Many a hoarded winter-store
Will be hidden on thy breast.
Things thou longest for
Will not fear or shun thee more.

Thou shalt intimately lie
In the roots of flowers that thrust
Upwards from thee to the sky,
With no more distrust,
When they blossom from thy dust.

Silent labours of the rain
Shall be near thee, reconciled;
Little lives of leaves and grain,
All things shy and wild
Tell thee secrets, quiet child.

Earth, set free from thy fair fancies
And the art thou shalt resign,
Will bring forth her rue and pansies
Unto more divine
Thoughts than any thoughts of thine.

Nought will fear thee, humbled creature
There will lie thy mortal burden
Pressed unto the heart of Nature,
Songless in a garden,
With a long embrace of pardon.

Then the truth all creatures tell,
And His will whom thou entreatest,
Shall absorb thee; there shall dwell
Silence, the completest
Of thy poems, last, and sweetest.

SONG OF THE SPRING TO THE SUMMER

THE POET SINGS TO HER POET

O POET of the time to be,
My conqueror, I began for thee.
Enter into thy poet's pain,
And take the riches of the rain,
And make the perfect year for me.

Thou unto whom my lyre shall fall,
Whene'er thou comest, hear my call.
O, keep the promise of my lays,
Take the sweet parable of my days;
I trust thee with the aim of all.

And if thy thoughts unfold from me,
Know that I too have hints of thee,
Dim hopes that come across my mind
In the rare days of warmer wind,
And tones of summer in the sea.

And I have set thy paths, I guide
Thy blossoms on the wild hillside.
And I, thy bygone poet, share
The flowers that throng thy feet where'er
I led thy feet before I died.

TO THE BELOVED

OH, not more subtly silence strays
Amongst the winds, between the voices,
Mingling alike with pensive lays,
And with the music that rejoices,
Than thou art present in my days.

My silence, life returns to thee
In all the pauses of her breath.
Hush back to rest the melody
That out of thee awakeneth;
And thou, wake ever, wake for me.

Full, full is life in hidden places,
For thou art silence unto me.
Full, full is thought in endless spaces.
Full is my life. A silent sea
Lies round all shores with long embraces.

Thou art like silence all unvexed
Though wild words part my soul from thee.
Thou art like silence unperplexed,
A secret and a mystery
Between one footfall and the next.

Most dear pause in a mellow lay!
Thou art inwoven with every air.
With thee the wildest tempests play,
And snatches of thee everywhere
Make little heavens throughout a day.

Darkness and solitude shine, for me.
For life's fair outward part are rife
The silver noises; let them be.
It is the very soul of life
Listens for thee, listens for thee.

O pause between the sobs of cares!
O thought within all thought that is
Trance between laughters unawares!
Thou art the form of melodies,
And thou the ecstasy of prayers.

MEDITATION

Rorate Cæli desuper, et nubes pluant Justum.
Aperiatur Terra, et germinet Salvatorem.

NO sudden thing of glory and fear
Was the Lord's coming; but the dear
Slow Nature's days followed each other
To form the Saviour from his Mother
One of the children of the year.

The earth, the rain, received the trust,
The sun and dews, to frame the Just.
He drew his daily life from these,
According to his own decrees
Who makes man from the fertile dust.

Sweet summer and the winter wild,
These brought him forth, the Undefiled.
The happy Springs renewed again
His daily bread, the growing grain,
The food and raiment of the Child.

TO THE BELOVED DEAD

A LAMENT

BELOVED, thou art like a tune that idle fingers
Play on a window-pane.
The time is there, the form of music lingers;
But O thou sweetest strain,
Where is thy soul? Thou liest i' the wind and rain.

Even as to him who plays that idle air,
It seems a melody,
For his own soul is full of it, so, my Fair,
Dead, thou dost live in me,
And all this lonely soul is full of thee.

Thou song of songs!—not music as before
Unto the outward ear;
My spirit sings thee inly evermore,
Thy falls with tear on tear.
I fail for thee, thou art too sweet, too dear.

Thou silent song, thou ever voiceless rhyme,
Is there no pulse to move thee,
At windy dawn, with a wild heart beating time,
And falling tears above thee,
O music stifled from the ears that love thee?

Oh, for a strain of thee from outer air!
Soul wearies soul, I find.
Of thee, thee, thee, I am mournfully aware,
—Contained in one poor mind,
Who wert in tune and time to every wind.

Poor grave, poor lost beloved! but I burn
For some more vast To be.
As he that played that secret tune may turn
And strike it on a lyre triumphantly,
I wait some future, all a lyre for thee.

SONNET

YOUR own fair youth, you care so little for it,
Smiling towards Heaven, you would not stay the advances
Of time and change upon your happiest fancies.
I keep your golden hour, and will restore it.

If ever, in time to come, you would explore it—
Your old self whose thoughts went like last year's pansies,
Look unto me; no mirror keeps its glances;
In my unfailing praises now I store it.

To keep all joys of yours from Time's estranging,
I shall be then a treasury where your gay,
Happy, and pensive past for ever is.

I shall be then a garden charmed from changing,
In which your June has never passed away.
Walk there awhile among my memories.

IN AUTUMN

THE leaves are many under my feet,
And drift one way.
Their scent of death is weary and sweet.
A flight of them is in the grey
Where sky and forest meet.

The low winds moan for dead sweet years;
The birds sing all for pain,
Of a common thing, to weary ears,—
Only a summer's fate of rain,
And a woman's fate of tears.

I walk to love and life alone
Over these mournful places,
Across the summer overthrown,
The dead joys of these silent faces,
To claim my own.

I know his heart has beat to bright
  Sweet loves gone by.
I know the leaves that die to-night
  Once budded to the sky,
And I shall die from his delight.

O leaves, so quietly ending now,
  You have heard cuckoos sing.
And I will grow upon my bough
  If only for a Spring,
And fall when the rain is on my brow.

O tell me, tell me ere you die,
  Is it worth the pain?
You bloomed so fair, you waved so high
  Now that the sad days wane,
Are you repenting where you lie?

I lie amongst you, and I kiss
  Your fragrance mouldering.
O dead delights, is it such bliss,
  That tuneful Spring?
Is love so sweet, that comes to this?

O dying blisses of the year,
I hear the young lambs bleat,
The clamouring birds i' the copse I hear,
I hear the waving wheat,
Together laid on a dead-leaf bier.

Kiss me again as I kiss you;
Kiss me again;
For all your tuneful nights of dew,
In this your time of rain,
For all your kisses when Spring was new.

You will not, broken hearts; let be,
I pass across your death
To a golden summer you shall not see,
And in your dying breath
There is no benison for me.

There is an autumn yet to wane,
There are leaves yet to fall,
Which, when I kiss, may kiss again,
And, pitied, pity me all for all,
And love me in mist and rain.

A LETTER FROM A GIRL TO HER OWN OLD AGE

LISTEN, and when thy hand this paper presses,
O time-worn woman, think of her who blesses
What thy thin fingers touch, with her caresses.

O mother, for the weight of years that break thee!
O daughter, for slow time must yet awake thee,
And from the changes of my heart must make thee.

O fainting traveller, morn is grey in heaven.
Dost thou remember how the clouds were driven?
And are they calm about the fall of even?

Pause near the ending of thy long migration,
For this one sudden hour of desolation
Appeals to one hour of thy meditation.

Suffer, O silent one, that I remind thee
Of the great hills that stormed the sky behind thee,
Of the wild winds of power that have resigned thee.

Know that the mournful plain where thou must wander
Is but a grey and silent world, but ponder
The misty mountains of the morning yonder.

Listen :—the mountain winds with rain were fretting,
And sudden gleams the mountain-tops besetting.
I cannot let thee fade to death, forgetting.

What part of this wild heart of mine I know not
Will follow with thee where the great winds blow not,
And where the young flowers of the mountain grow not.

Yet let my letter with thy lost thoughts in it
Tell what the way was when thou didst begin it,
And win with thee the goal when thou shalt win it

Oh, in some hour of thine my thoughts shall guide
thee.
Suddenly, though time, darkness, silence hide thee,
This wind from thy lost country flits beside thee,—

Telling thee: all thy memories moved the maiden,
With thy regrets was morning over-shaden,
With sorrow thou hast left, her life was laden.

But whither shall my thoughts turn to pursue thee
Life changes, and the years and days renew thee
Oh, Nature brings my straying heart unto thee.

Her winds will join us, with their constant kisses
Upon the evening as the morning tresses,
Her summers breathe the same unchanging odours.

And we, so altered in our shifting phases,
Track one another 'mid the many mazes
By the eternal child-breath of the daisies.

I have not writ this letter of divining
To make a glory of thy silent pining,
A triumph of thy mute and strange declining.

Only one youth, and the bright life was shrouded.
Only one morning, and the day was clouded.
And one old age with all regrets is crowded.

Oh, hush; oh, hush! Thy tears my words are steeping.
Oh, hush, hush, hush! So full, the fount of weeping?
Poor eyes, so quickly moved, so near to sleeping?

Pardon the girl; such strange desires beset her.
Poor woman, lay aside the mournful letter
That breaks thy heart; the one who wrote, forget her.

The one who now thy faded features guesses,
With filial fingers thy grey hair caresses,
With morning tears thy mournful twilight blesses.

SONG

AS the inhastening tide doth roll,
Dear and desired, along the whole
Wide shining strand, and floods the caves
Your love comes filling with happy waves
The open sea-shore of my soul.

But inland from the seaward spaces,
None knows, not even you, the places
Brimmed, at your coming, out of sight,
—The little solitudes of delight
This tide constrains in dim embraces.

You see the happy shore, wave-rimmed,
But know not of the quiet dimmed
Rivers your coming floods and fills,
The little pools 'mid happier hills,
My silent rivulets, over-brimmed.

What, I have secrets from you? Yes.
But, visiting Sea, your love doth press
And reach in further than you know,
And fills all these; and when you go,
There 's loneliness in loneliness.

BUILDERS OF RUINS

WE build with strength the deep tower-wall
That shall be shattered thus and thus.
And fair and great are court and hall,
But *how* fair—this is not for us,
Who know the lack that lurks in all.

We know, we know how all too bright
The hues are that our painting wears,
And how the marble gleams too white;—
We speak in unknown tongues, the years
Interpret everything aright,

And crown with weeds our pride of towers
And warm our marble through with sun,
And break our pavements through with flowers,
With an Amen when all is done,
Knowing these perfect things of ours.

O days, we ponder, left alone,
Like children in their lonely hour,
And in our secrets keep your own,
As seeds the colour of the flower.
To-day they are not all unknown,

The stars that 'twixt the rise and fall,
Like relic-seers, shall one by one
Stand musing o'er our empty hall;
And setting moons shall brood upon
The frescoes of our inward wall.

And when some midsummer shall be,
Hither will come some little one
(Dusty with bloom of flowers is he),
Sit on a ruin i' the late long sun,
And think, one foot upon his knee.

And where they wrought, these lives of ours,
So many-worded, many-souled,
A North-west wind will take the towers,
And dark with colour, sunny and cold,
Will range alone among the flowers.

And here or there, at our desire,
The little clamorous owl shall sit
Through her still time; and we aspire
To make a law (and know not it)
Unto the life of a wild briar.

Our purpose is distinct and dear,
Though from our open eyes 'tis hidden.
Thou, Time-to-come, shalt make it clear,
Undoing our work; we are children chidden
With pity and smiles of many a year.

Who shall allot the praise, and guess
What part is yours and what is ours?—
O years that certainly will bless
Our flowers with fruits, our seeds with flowers,
With ruin all our perfectness.

Be patient, Time, of our delays,
Too happy hopes, and wasted fears,
Our faithful ways, our wilful ways,
Solace our labours, O our seers
The seasons, and our bards the days;

And make our pause and silence brim
With the shrill children's play, and sweets
Of those pathetic flowers and dim,
Of those eternal flowers my Keats
Dying felt growing over him.

SONNET

I TOUCHED the heart that loved me as a player
Touches a lyre; content with my poor skill
No touch save mine knew my beloved (and still
I thought at times: Is there no sweet lost air
Old loves could wake in him, I cannot share?).
Oh, he alone, alone could so fulfil
My thoughts in sound to the measure of my will.
He is gone, and silence takes me unaware.

The songs I knew not he resumes, set free
From my constraining love, alas for me!
His part in our tune goes with him; my part
Is locked in me for ever; I stand as mute
As one with full strong music in his heart
Whose fingers stray upon a shattered lute.

SONG OF THE DAY TO THE NIGHT

THE POET SINGS TO HIS POET

FROM dawn to dusk, and from dusk to dawn,
We two are sundered always, sweet.
A few stars shake o'er the rocky lawn
And the cold sea-shore when we meet.
The twilight comes with thy shadowy feet.

We are not day and night, my Fair,
But one. It is an hour of hours.
And thoughts that are not otherwhere
Are thought here 'mid the blown sea-flowers,
This meeting and this dusk of ours.

Delight has taken Pain to her heart,
And there is dusk and stars for these.
Oh, linger, linger! They would not part;
And the wild wind comes from over-seas
With a new song to the olive trees.

And when we meet by the sounding pine
Sleep draws near to his dreamless brother.
And when thy sweet eyes answer mine,
Peace nestles close to her mournful mother,
And Hope and Weariness kiss each other.

'SOEUR MONIQUE'

A RONDEAU BY COUPERIN

QUIET form of silent nun,
What has given you to my inward eyes?
What has marked you, unknown one,
In the throngs of centuries
That mine ears do listen through?
This old master's melody
That expresses you,
This admired simplicity,
Tender, with a serious wit,
And two words, the name of it,
'Soeur Monique.'

And if sad the music is,
It is sad with mysteries
Of a small immortal thing
That the passing ages sing,—

Simple music making mirth
Of the dying and the birth
Of the people of the earth.

No, not sad; we are beguiled,
Sad with living as we are;
Ours the sorrow, outpouring
Sad self on a selfless thing,
As our eyes and hearts are mild
With our sympathy for Spring,
With a pity sweet and wild
For the innocent and far,
With our sadness in a star,
Or our sadness in a child.

But two words, and this sweet air.
Soeur Monique,
Had he more, who set you there?
Was his music-dream of you
Of some perfect nun he knew,
Or of some ideal, as true?

And I see you where you stand
With your life held in your hand

As a rosary of days.
And your thoughts in calm arrays,
And your innocent prayers are told
On your rosary of days.
And the young days and the old
With their quiet prayers did meet
When the chaplet was complete.

Did it vex you, the surmise
Of this wind of words, this storm of cries,
Though you kept the silence so
In the storms of long ago,
And you keep it, like a star?
—Of the evils triumphing,
Strong, for all your perfect conquering,
Silenced conqueror that you are?
And I wonder at your peace, I wonder.
Would it trouble you to know,
Tender soul, the world and sin
By your calm feet trodden under
Long ago,
Living now, mighty to win?
And your feet are vanished like the snow.

Vanished; but the poet, he
In whose dream your face appears,
He who ranges unknown years
With your music in his heart,
Speaks to you familiarly
Where you keep apart,
And invents you as you were.
And your picture, O my nun!
Is a strangely easy one,
For the holy weed you wear,
For your hidden eyes and hidden hair,
And in picturing you I may
Scarcely go astray.

O the vague reality!
The mysterious certainty!
O strange truth of these my guesses
In the wide thought-wildernesses!
—Truth of one divined of many flowers;
Of one raindrop in the showers
Of the long-ago swift rain;
Of one tear of many tears
In some world-renowned pain;

Of one daisy 'mid the centuries of sun;
Of a little living nun
In the garden of the years.

Yes, I am not far astray;
But I guess you as might one
Pausing when young March is grey,
In a violet-peopled day;
All his thoughts go out to places that he
knew,
To his child-home in the sun,
To the fields of his regret,
To one place i' the innocent March air,
By one olive, and invent
The familiar form and scent
Safely; a white violet
Certainly is there.

Soeur Monique, remember me.
'Tis not in the past alone
I am picturing you to be;
But my little friend, my own,

In my moment, pray for me.
For another dream is mine,
And another dream is true,
Sweeter even,
Of the little ones that shine
Lost within the light divine,—
Of some meekest flower, or you,
In the fields of Heaven.

IN EARLY SPRING

O SPRING, I know thee! Seek for sweet surprise
In the young children's eyes.
But I have learnt the years, and know the yet
Leaf-folded violet.
Mine ear, awake to silence, can foretell
The cuckoo's fitful bell.
I wander in a grey time that encloses
June and the wild hedge-roses.
A year's procession of the flowers doth pass
My feet, along the grass.
And all you sweet birds silent yet, I know
The notes that stir you so,
Your songs yet half devised in the dim dear
Beginnings of the year.
In these young days you meditate your part;
I have it all by heart.

I know the secrets of the seeds of flowers
Hidden and warm with showers,
And how, in kindling Spring, the cuckoo shall
Alter his interval.
But not a flower or song I ponder is
My own, but memory's.
I shall be silent in those days desired
Before a world inspired.
O dear brown birds, compose your old song-phrases,
Earth, thy familiar daisies.

The poet mused upon the dusky height,
Between two stars towards night,
His purpose in his heart. I watched, a space,
The meaning of his face:
There was the secret, fled from earth and skies,
Hid in his grey young eyes.
My heart and all the Summer wait his choice,
And wonder for his voice.
Who shall foretell his songs, and who aspire
But to divine his lyre?
Sweet earth, we know thy dimmest mysteries,
But he is lord of his.

PARTED

FAREWELL to one now silenced quite,
Sent out of hearing, out of sight,—
My friend of friends, whom I shall miss.
He is not banished, though, for this,—
Nor he, nor sadness, nor delight.

Though I shall walk with him no more,
A low voice sounds upon the shore.
He must not watch my resting-place
But who shall drive a mournful face
From the sad winds about my door?

I shall not hear his voice complain,
But who shall stop the patient rain?
His tears must not disturb my heart,
But who shall change the years, and part
The world from every thought of pain?

Although my life is left so dim,
The morning crowns the mountain-rim;
  Joy is not gone from summer skies,
  Nor innocence from children's eyes,
And all these things are part of him.

He is not banished, for the showers
Yet wake this green warm earth of ours.
  How can the summer but be sweet?
  I shall not have him at my feet,
And yet my feet are on the flowers.

REGRETS

AS, when the seaward ebbing tide doth pour
Out by the low sand spaces,
The parting waves slip back to clasp the shore
With fingering embraces,—

So in the tide of life that carries me
From where thy true heart dwells,
Waves of my thoughts and memories turn to thee
With lessening farewells;

Waving of hands; dreams, when the day forgets;
A care half lost in cares
The saddest of my verses; dim regrets;
Thy name among my prayers.

I would the day might come, so waited for,
So patiently besought,
When I, returning, should fill up once more
Thy desolated thought;

And fill thy loneliness that lies apart
  In still, persistent pain.
Shall I content thee, O thou broken heart,
  As the tide comes again,

And brims the little sea-shore lakes, and sets
  Seaweeds afloat, and fills
The silent pools, rivers and rivulets
  Among the inland hills?

SONG

MY Fair, no beauty of thine will last
Save in my love's eternity.
Thy smiles, that light thee fitfully,
Are lost for ever—their moment past—
Except the few thou givest to me.

Thy sweet words vanish day by day,
As all breath of mortality;
Thy laughter, done, must cease to be,
And all thy dear tones pass away,
Except the few that sing to me.

Hide then within my heart, oh, hide
All thou art loth should go from thee.
Be kinder to thyself and me.
My cupful from this river's tide
Shall never reach the long sad sea.

SONNET

IN FEBRUARY

RICH meanings of the prophet-Spring adorn,
Unseen, this colourless sky of folded showers,
And folded winds; no blossom in the bowers.
A poet's face asleep is this grey morn.

Now in the midst of the old world forlorn
A mystic child is set in these still hours.
I keep this time, even before the flowers,
Sacred to all the young and the unborn;

To all the miles and miles of unsprung wheat,
And to the Spring waiting beyond the portal
And to the future of my own young art,

And, among all these things, to you, my sweet,
My friend, to your calm face and the immortal
Child tarrying all your life-time in your heart

SAN LORENZO GIUSTINIANI'S MOTHER

I HAD not seen my son's dear face
(He chose the cloister by God's grace)
Since it had come to full flower-time.
I hardly guessed at its perfect prime,
That folded flower of his dear face.

Mine eyes were veiled by mists of tears
When on a day in many years
One of his Order came. I thrilled,
Facing, I thought, that face fulfilled.
I doubted, for my mists of tears.

His blessing be with me for ever!
My hope and doubt were hard to sever.
—That altered face, those holy weeds.
I filled his wallet and kissed his beads,
And lost his echoing feet for ever.

If to my son my alms were given
I know not, and I wait for Heaven.
He did not plead for child of mine,
But for another Child divine,
And unto Him it was surely given.

There is One alone who cannot change;
Dreams are we, shadows, visions strange;
And all I give is given to One.
I might mistake my dearest son,
But never the Son who cannot change.

SONNET

THE LOVE OF NARCISSUS

LIKE him who met his own eyes in the river,
The poet trembles at his own long gaze
That meets him through the changing nights and days
From out great Nature; all her waters quiver
With his fair image facing him for ever;
The music that he listens to betrays
His own heart to his ears; by trackless ways
His wild thoughts tend to him in long endeavour.

His dreams are far among the silent hills;
His vague voice calls him from the darkened plain
With winds at night; strange recognition thrills
His lonely heart with piercing love and pain;
He knows his sweet mirth in the mountain rills,
His weary tears that touch him with the rain.

TO A LOST MELODY

THOU art not dead, O sweet lost melody,
Sung beyond memory,
When golden to the winds this world of ours
Waved wild with boundless flowers;
Sung in some past when wildernesses were,—
Not dead, not dead, lost air!
Yet in the ages long where lurkest thou,
And what soul knows thee now?
Wert thou not given to sweeten every wind
From that o'erburdened mind
That bore thee through the young world, and that tongue
By which thou first wert sung?
Was not the holy choir the endless dome,
And nature all thy home?
Did not the warm gale clasp thee to his breast,
Lulling thy storms to rest?

And is the June air laden with thee now,
Passing the summer-bough?
And is the dawn-wind on a lonely sea
Balmy with thoughts of thee?
To rock on daybreak winds dost thou rejoice,
As first on his strong voice
Whose radiant morning soul did give thee birth,
Gave thee to heaven and earth?
Or did each bird win one dear note of thee
To pipe eternally?
Art thou the secret of the small field-flowers
Nodding thy time for hours,
—Blown by the happy winds from hill to hill,
And such a secret still?
Or wert thou rapt awhile to other spheres
To gladden tenderer ears?
Doth music's soul contain thee, precious air,
Sleepest thou clasped there,
Until a time shall come for thee to start
Into some unborn heart?
Then wilt thou as the clouds of ages roll,
Thou migratory soul,

Amid a different, wilder, wilderness
—In crowds that throng and press,
Revive thy blessed cadences forgotten
In some soul new-begotten?
Oh, wilt thou ever tire of thy long rest
On nature's silent breast?
And wilt thou leave thy rainbow showers, to bear
A part in human care?
—Forsake thy boundless silence to make choice
Of some pathetic voice?
—Forsake thy stars, thy suns, thy moons, thy skies
For man's desiring sighs?

SONNET

THE POET TO NATURE

I HAVE no secrets from thee, lyre sublime,
My lyre whereof I make my melody.
I sing one way like the west wind through thee,
With my whole heart, and hear thy sweet strings chime.

But thou, who soundest in my tune and rhyme,
Hast tones I wake not, in thy land and sea,
Loveliness not for me, secrets from me,
Thoughts for another, and another time.

And as, the west wind passed, the south wind alters
His intimate sweet things, his hues of noon,
The voices of his waves, sound of his pine,

The meanings of his lost heart,—this thought falters
In my short song—'Another bard shall tune
Thee, my one Lyre, to other songs than mine.'

THE POET TO HIS CHILDHOOD

IN my thought I see you stand with a path on either hand,
—Hills that look into the sun, and there a river'd meadow-land.
And your lost voice with the things that it decreed across me thrills,
When you thought, and chose the hills.

'If it prove a life of pain, greater have I judged the gain.
With a singing soul for music's sake, I climb and meet the rain,
And I choose, whilst I am calm, my thought and labouring to be
Unconsoled by sympathy.'

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But how dared you use me so? For you bring my
ripe years low
To your child's whim and a destiny your child-soul
could not know.
And that small voice legislating I revolt against, with
tears.
But you mark not, through the years.

'To the mountain leads my way. If the plains are
green to-day,
These my barren hills are flushing faintly, strangely, in
the May,
With the presence of the Spring amongst the smallest
flowers that grow.'
But the summer in the snow?

Do you know, who are so bold, how in sooth the rule
will hold,
Settled by a wayward child's ideal at some ten years
old?
—How the human arms you slip from, thoughts and
love you stay not for,
Will not open to you more?

You were rash then, little child, for the skies with storms are wild,
And you faced the dim horizon with its whirl of mists, and smiled,
Climbed a little higher, lonelier, in the solitary sun,
To feel how the winds came on.

But your sunny silence there, solitude so light to bear,
Will become a long dumb world up in the colder sadder air,
And the little mournful lonelinesses in the little hills.
Wider wilderness fulfils.

And if e'er you should come down to the village or the town,
With the cold rain for your garland, and the wind for your renown,
You will stand upon the thresholds with a face of dumb desire,
Nor be known by any fire.

It is memory that shrinks. You were all too brave,
methinks,
Climbing solitudes of flowering cistus and the thin
wild pinks,
Musing, setting to a haunting air in one vague reverie
All the life that was to be.

With a smile do I complain in the safety of the pain,
Knowing that my feet can never quit their solitudes
again;
But regret may turn with longing to that one hour's
choice you had,
When the silence broodeth sad.

I rebel *not*, child gone by, but obey you wonderingly,
For you knew not, young rash speaker, all you spoke,
and now will I,
With the life, and all the loneliness revealed that you
thought fit,
Sing the Amen, knowing it.

SONNET

A POET of one mood in all my lays,
Ranging all life to sing one only love,
Like a west wind across the world I move,
Sweeping my harp of floods mine own wild ways.

The countries change, but not the west-wind days
Which are my songs. My soft skies shine above,
And on all seas the colours of a dove,
And on all fields a flash of silver greys.

I make the whole world answer to my art
And sweet monotonous meanings. In your ears
I change not ever, bearing, for my part,
One thought that is the treasure of my years,
A small cloud full of rain upon my heart
And in mine arms, clasped, like a child in tears.

AN UNMARKED FESTIVAL

THERE 'S a feast undated yet:
Both our true lives hold it fast,—
The first day we ever met.
What a great day came and passed!
—Unknown then, but known at last.

And we met: You knew not me,
Mistress of your joys and fears;
Held my hands that held the key
Of the treasure of your years,
Of the fountain of your tears.

For you knew not it was I,
And I knew not it was you.
We have learnt, as days went by.
But a flower struck root and grew
Underground, and no one knew.

Days of days! Unmarked it rose,
In whose hours we were to meet;
And forgotten passed. Who knows,
Was earth cold or sunny, Sweet,
At the coming of your feet?

One mere day, we thought; the measure
Of such days the year fulfils.
Now, how dearly would we treasure
Something from its fields, its rills,
And its memorable hills;

—But one leaf of oak or lime,
Or one blossom from its bowers
No one gathered at the time.
Oh, to keep that day of ours
By one relic of its flowers!

SONNET

THE NEOPHYTE

WHO knows what days I answer for to-day?
Giving the bud I give the flower. I bow
This yet unfaded and a faded brow;
Bending these knees and feeble knees, I pray.

Thoughts yet unripe in me I bend one way,
Give one repose to pain I know not now,
One leaven to joy that comes, I guess not how.
I dedicate my fields when Spring is grey.

Oh, rash! (I smile) to pledge my hidden wheat.
I fold to-day at altars far apart
Hands trembling with what toils? In their retreat
I seal my love to-be, my folded art.
I light the tapers at my head and feet,
And lay the crucifix on this silent heart.

SONNET

SPRING ON THE ALBAN HILLS

O'ER the Campagna it is dim warm weather;
The Spring comes with a full heart silently,
And many thoughts; a faint flash of the sea
Divides two mists; straight falls the falling feather.

With wild Spring meanings hill and plain together
Grow pale, or just flush with a dust of flowers.
Rome in the ages, dimmed with all her towers,
Floats in the midst, a little cloud at tether.

I fain would put my hands about thy face,
Thou with thy thoughts, who art another Spring,
And draw thee to me like a mournful child.

Thou lookest on me from another place;
I touch not this day's secret, nor the thing
That in the silence makes thy sweet eyes wild.

SONG OF THE NIGHT AT DAYBREAK

ALL my stars forsake me,
And the dawn-winds shake me.
Where shall I betake me?

Whither shall I run
Till the set of sun,
Till the day be done?

To the mountain-mine,
To the boughs o' the pine,
To the blind man's eyne,

To a brow that is
Bowed upon the knees,
Sick with memories.

SONNET

TO A DAISY

SLIGHT as thou art, thou art enough to hide,
Like all created things, secrets from me,
And stand a barrier to eternity.
And I, how can I praise thee well and wide

From where I dwell—upon the hither side?
Thou little veil for so great mystery,
When shall I penetrate all things and thee,
And then look back? For this I must abide,

Till thou shalt grow and fold and be unfurled
Literally between me and the world.
Then I shall drink from in beneath a spring,

And from a poet's side shall read his book.
O daisy mine, what will it be to look
From God's side even of such a simple thing?

SONNET

TO ONE POEM IN A SILENT TIME

WHO looked for thee, thou little song of mine?
This winter of a silent poet's heart
Is suddenly sweet with thee, but what thou art,
Mid-winter flower, I would I could divine.

Art thou a last one, orphan of thy line?
Did the dead summer's last warmth foster thee?
Or is Spring folded up unguessed in me,
And stirring out of sight,—and thou the sign?

Where shall I look—backwards or to the morrow
For others of thy fragrance, secret child?
Who knows if last things or if first things claim thee?

—Whether thou be the last smile of my sorrow,
Or else a joy too sweet, a joy too wild?
How, my December violet, shall I name thee?

FUTURE POETRY

NO new delights to our desire
The singers of the past can yield.
I lift mine eyes to hill and field,
And see in them your yet dumb lyre,
Poets unborn and unrevealed.

Singers to come, what thoughts will start
To song? what words of yours be sent
Through man's soul, and with earth be blent
These worlds of nature and the heart
Await you like an instrument.

Who knows what musical flocks of words
Upon these pine-tree tops will light,
And crown these towers in circling flight
And cross these seas like summer birds,
And give a voice to the day and night?

Something of you already is ours;
Some mystic part of you belongs
To us whose dreams your future throngs,
Who look on hills, and trees, and flowers,
Which will mean so much in your songs.

I wonder, like the maid who found,
And knelt to lift, the lyre supreme
Of Orpheus from the Thracian stream.
She dreams on its sealed past profound;
On a deep future sealed I dream.

She bears it in her wanderings
Within her arms, and has not pressed
Her unskilled fingers, but her breast
Upon those silent sacred strings;
I, too, clasp mystic strings at rest.

For I, i' the world of lands and seas,
The sky of wind and rain and fire,
And in man's world of long desire—
In all that is yet dumb in these—
Have found a more mysterious lyre.

THE POET SINGS TO HER POET

THE MOON TO THE SUN

AS the full moon shining there
To the sun that lighteth her
Am I unto thee for ever,
O my secret glory-giver!
O my light, I am dark but fair,
Black but fair.

Shine, Earth loves thee! And then shine
And be loved through thoughts of mine.
All thy secrets that I treasure
I translate them at my pleasure.
I am crowned with glory of thine,
Thine, not thine.

I make pensive thy delight,
And thy strong gold silver-white.

Though all beauty of mine thou makest,
Yet to earth which thou forsakest
I have made thee fair all night,
Day all night.

A POET'S SONNET

IF I should quit thee, sacrifice, forswear,
To what, my art, shall I give thee in keeping?
To the long winds of heaven? Shall these come sweeping
My songs forgone against my face and hair?

Or shall the mountain streams my lost joys bear,
My past poetic pain in the rain be weeping?
No, I shall live a poet waking, sleeping,
And I shall die a poet unaware.

From me, my art, thou canst not pass away;
And I, a singer though I cease to sing,
Shall own thee without joy in thee or woe.

Through my indifferent words of every day,
Scattered and all unlinked the rhymes shall ring
And make my poem; and I shall not know.

THE MODERN POET

A SONG OF DERIVATIONS

I COME from nothing; but from where
Come the undying thoughts I bear?
Down, through long links of death and birth,
From the past poets of the earth.
My immortality is there.

I am like the blossom of an hour.
But long, long vanished sun and shower
Awoke my breath i' the young world's air.
I track the past back everywhere
Through seed and flower and seed and flower.

Or I am like a stream that flows
Full of the cold springs that arose
In morning lands, in distant hills;
And down the plain my channel fills
With melting of forgotten snows.

Voices, I have not heard, possessed
My own fresh songs; my thoughts are blessed
With relics of the far unknown.
And mixed with memories not my own
The sweet streams throng into my breast.

Before this life began to be,
The happy songs that wake in me
Woke long ago and far apart.
Heavily on this little heart
Presses this immortality.

AFTER A PARTING

FAREWELL has long been said; I have forgone thee;
I never name thee even.
But how shall I learn virtues and yet shun thee?
For thou art so near Heaven
That heavenward meditations pause upon thee.

Thou dost beset the path to every shrine;
My trembling thoughts discern
Thy goodness in the good for which I pine;
And if I turn from but one sin, I turn
Unto a smile of thine.

How shall I thrust thee apart
Since all my growth tends to thee night and day—
To thee faith, hope, and art?
Swift are the currents setting all one way;
They draw my life, my life, out of my heart.

RENOUNCEMENT

I MUST not think of thee; and, tired yet strong,
I shun the thought that lurks in all delight—
The thought of thee—and in the blue Heaven's height,
And in the sweetest passage of a song.

Oh, just beyond the fairest thoughts that throng
This breast, the thought of thee waits, hidden yet bright;
But it must never, never come in sight;
I must stop short of thee the whole day long.

But when sleep comes to close each difficult day,
When night gives pause to the long watch I keep,
And all my bonds I needs must loose apart,

Must doff my will as raiment laid away,—
With the first dream that comes with the first sleep
I run, I run, I am gathered to thy heart.

VENI CREATOR

SO humble things Thou hast borne for us, O God,
Left'st Thou a path of lowliness untrod?
Yes, one, till now; another Olive-Garden.
For we endure the tender pain of pardon,—
One with another we forbear. Give heed,
Look at the mournful world Thou hast decreed.
The time has come. At last we hapless men
Know all our haplessness all through. Come, then,
Endure undreamed humility: Lord of Heaven,
Come to our ignorant hearts and be forgiven.

Most of these verses were written in the author's early youth, and were published in a volume called 'Preludes,' now out of print. Other poems, representing the same transitory and early thoughts, which appeared in that volume, are now omitted as cruder than the rest; and their place is taken by the few verses written in maturer years.

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